



Week 3 - Fall Into Fruit



Nature's dessert.

In many parts of the world, fresh fruit is considered the perfect dessert. In fine art museums the world round, still life paintings of carefully arranged fruit adorn gallery walls. It would be hard to ask for a more perfect food ... easy to prepare, beautiful to look at, naturally sweet, and rich in nutrients. In the fall, New Mexico's Farmers Markets bring us peaches, melons, apples and pears to name a few favorites. Plan your weekly shopping to include a stop at your local farmers market or roadside stand. It's hard to beat the earthy scents of apples and roasting chiles, mixed with the crisp fall air. Pages 16-20 in the Healthy Harvest Participant Booklet offer creative suggestions for including more fresh fruit in meals and snacks.

Isn't there a lot of sugar in fruit?

The energy supplied by fruit comes from carbohydrate – fructose and sucrose – types of simple sugars or saccharides. Carbohydrate yields 4 calories/gram (protein yields 4 calories/gram and fat yields 9 calories/gram). If sugar were all that fruits supplied, they would be no better than sodas, candy or other processed sweets. But fruits are very nutrient dense – they provide generous amount of nutrients per calorie. Fruits are rich sources of vitamins (B vitamins & C, A, K), minerals (potassium, etc.), fiber (soluble and insoluble types), antioxidants and phytochemicals. Short term and long term prospective nutrition studies continue to support the important role of fruit and vegetable intake in lowering heart disease, stroke and total mortality.¹ “Nutrients in whole foods, such as fruit and vegetables, may have additive and synergistic effects not available through dietary supplementation.” Many experts recommend limiting *added sugars* from processed foods to no more than 10 percent of daily intake. For a person consuming 2000 calories daily, this amounts to about 50 grams or less of added sugar. One can of a soft drink contains 35-40 grams, or 10-12 teaspoons of sugar.

More on juice.

Wise advice is offered in the booklet about carefully reading juice and juice beverage labels. Most people should limit their total juice intake to 4-6 ounces per day (1 serving), opting more often for whole fruit. This particularly holds true for individuals who need to watch their total carbohydrate intake, since the carbohydrate in juice can add up quickly.

What about canned or dried fruit?

In the winter or just for convenience, canned and dried fruit makes a nice change. Just as with juice, it pays to read the label. Look for fruits packed in water or juice, and fruits that are dried with no (or little) added sugars. When choosing dried fruit, keep in mind that a serving is typically about ¼ cup, or half the amount of a fresh serving. Refer to **Setting Goals, Tracking Progress and Using Pyramids** for information on the calories and carbohydrates in a serving of fruit.

¹ Am J Clin Nutr 2002;76:93–9. Fruit and vegetable intake and risk of cardiovascular disease in US adults: the first National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey Epidemiologic Follow-up Study

Web sites for more information

- *Eat 5 A Day for Better Health*, National Cancer Institute's and Produce for Better Health Foundation's campaign to increase the average consumption of fruits and vegetables to 5 servings daily. Includes quick tips and great recipes. <http://www.5aday.gov/>
- *Food Fit.Com* Fall Fruit Guide
http://www.foodfit.com/healthy/healthyFallFoods_Fruit.asp
- *The Cook's Thesaurus*: Fruits. Descriptions, photos and preparation tips.
<http://www.foodsubs.com/>
- Check individual fruit producer organizations, using search terms like "commission" (Florida Citrus Commission), "board" (e.g. California Dried Plum Board, Maryland Apple Promotion Board, Fig Advisory Board), etc.